SISTER ROSE.

A STORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

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CHAPTER XIX.—(CONTINUED.)

"And in excellent health, except that she is subject now and then to nervous attacks, having evidently, as I believe, been struck with some dreadful fright—most likely during that accursed time of the Terror, for they came from Paris—you don't drink, honest man! Why don't you drink? Very, very pretty in a pale way; figure perhaps too thin—let me pour it out for you—but an angel of gentleness, and attached in such a touching way to the citizen Maurice—"

"Citizen hostess! will you, or will you not, tell me where they live?"

"You droll little man! why did you not ask me that before, if you wanted to know? Finish your wine and come to the door. There's your change, and thank you for your custom, though it isn't much. Come to the door, I say, and don't interrupt me! You're an old man—can you see forty yards before you?—Yes, you can! Don't be peevish; that never did anybody any good yet. Now look back along the road where I am pointing. You see a large heap of stones? On the other side of the heap of stones there is a little path—you can't see that, but you can remember what I tell you? Good. You go down the path till you get to a stream; down the stream till you get to a bridge; down the other bank of the stream (after crossing the bridge) till you get to an old water-mill—a jewel of a water-mill! famous for miles around; artists from the four quarters of the globe are always coming to sketch it! Ah! what, you are getting peevish again? You won't wait? Impatient old man, what a life your wife must lead, if you have got one! Remember the bridge! Ah! your poor wife and children. I pity them, your daughters especially. Pst! pst! Remember the bridge—peevish old man, remember the bridge!"

Walking as fast as he could out of hearing of the Widow Duval's tongue, Lomaque took the path by the heap of stones which led out to the high road, crossed the stream, and arrived at the old water-mill. Close by it stood a cottage—a rough, simple building, with a strip of garden in front. Lomaque's observant eyes marked the graceful arrangement of the flower beds, and the delicate whiteness of the curtains that hung behind the badly-glazed narrow windows. "This must be the place," he said to himself, as he knocked at the door with his stick. "I can see the traces of her hand before I cross the threshold."

The door opened. "Pray, does the citizen Maurice"—Lomaque began, not seeing clearly, for the first moment, in the dark little passage.

Before he could say any more his hand was grasped, his carpet bag was taken from him, and a well-known voice cried: "Welcome! a thousand times welcome at last! Citizen Maurice is not at home; but Louis Trudaine takes his place, and is overjoyed to see once more the best and dearest of his friends!"

"I hardly know you again! How you are altered for the better!" exclaimed Lomaque, as they entered the parlor of the cottage.

"Remember that you see me after a long freedom from anxiety. Since I have lived here, I have gone to rest at night, and have not been afraid of the morning," replied Trudaine. He went out into the passage while he spoke, and called at the foot of the one flight of stairs which the cottage possessed. "Rose! Rose! come down! The friend whom you most wished to see has arrived at last!"

She answered the summons immediately. The frank friendly warmth of her greeting; her resolute determination, after the first inquiries were over, to help the guest to take off his upper coat with her own hands, so confused and delighted Lomaque, that he hardly knew which way to turn, or what to say.

"This is even more trying, in a pleasant way, to a lonely old fellow like me"—he was about to add, "than the unexpected civility of the hot cup of coffee years ago;" but remembering what recollections even that trifling circumstance might recall, he checked himself.

"More trying than what?" asked Rose, leading him to a chair.

"Ah! I forget. I am in a dotage already!" he answered, confusedly. "I have not got used just yet to the pleasure of seeing your kind face again."

CHAPTER XX.

IT WAS indeed a pleasure to look at that face now, after Lomaque's last experience of it. Three years of repose, though they had not restored to Rose those youthful attractions which she had lost forever in the days of the Terror, had not passed without leaving kindly outward traces of their healing progress. Though the girlish roundness had not returned to her cheeks, or the girlish delicacy of color to her complexion, her eyes had recovered much of their old softness, and her expression all of its old winning charm. What was left of latent sadness in her face, and of significant quietness in her manner, remained gently and harmlessly—remained rather to show what had been once than what was now.

When they were all seated, there was, however, something like a momentary return to the suspense and anxiety of past days in their faces, as Trudaine, looking earnestly at Lomaque, asked—"Do you bring any news from Paris?"

"None," he replied; "but excellent news, instead, from Rouen. I have heard, accidentally, through the employer whom I have been serving since we parted, that your old house by the river side is to let again."

Rose started from her chair. "Oh! Louis, if we could only live there once more! My flower-garden?" she continued, turning to Lomaque.

"Cultivated throughout," he answered, "by the late proprietor."

"And the laboratory?" added her brother.

"Left standing," said Lomaque. "Here is a letter with all the particulars. You may depend upon them, for the writer is the person charged with the letting of the house."

Trudaine looked over the letter eagerly.

"The price is not beyond our means," he said. "After our three years' economy here we can afford to give something for a great pleasure."

"Oh! what a day of happiness it will be when we go home again!" cried Rose. "Pray, write to your friend at once," she added, addressing Lomaque, "and say we take the house, before any one else is beforehand with us!"

He nodded; and folding up the letter mechanically in the old official form, made a note on it in the old official manner. Trudaine observed the action, and felt its association with past times of trouble and terror. His face grew grave again, as he said to Lomaque, "And is this good news really all the news of importance you have to tell us?"

Lomaque hesitated and fidgeted in his chair. "What other news I have will well bear keeping," he replied. "There are many questions I should like to ask first, about your sister and yourself. Do you mind allowing me to refer for a moment to the time when we last met?"

He addressed this inquiry to Rose, who answered in the negative; but her voice seemed to alter, even in saying the one word "No." She turned her head away when she spoke; and Lomaque noticed that her hands trembled as she took up some work lying on a table near, and hurriedly occupied herself with it.

"We speak as little about that time as possible," said Trudaine looking significantly towards his sister; "but we have some questions to ask you in our turn; so the allusion, for this once, is inevitable. Your sudden disappearance at the very crisis of that terrible time of danger has not yet been fully explained to us. The one short note which you left behind you helped us to guess at what had happened rather than to understand it."

"I can easily explain it now," answered Lomaque. "The sudden overthrow of the Reign of Terror which was salvation to you, was destruction to me. The new republican reign was a reign of mercy, except for the tail of Robespierre, as the phrase ran then. Every man who had been so wicked or so unfortunate as to be involved, even in the meanest capacity, with the machinery of the government of Terror, was threatened, and justly, with the fate of Robespierre. I among others fell under this menace of death. I deserved to die, and should have resigned myself to the guillotine, but for you. From the course taken by public events, I knew you would be saved; and although your safety was the work of circumstances, still I had a hand in rendering it possible at the outset; and a yearning came over me to behold you both free again with my own eyes—a selfish yearning to see, in you, a living, breathing, real result of the one good impulse of my heart, which I could look back on with satisfaction. The desire gave me a new interest in life. I resolved to escape death, if it were possible. For ten days I lay hidden in Paris. After that—thanks to certain scraps of useful knowledge which my experience in the office of secret police had given me—I succeeded in getting clear of Paris and in making my way safely to Switzerland. The rest of my story is so short, and so soon told, that one relation I knew of in the world to apply to, was a cousin of mine (whom I had never seen before), established as a silk-mercer at Berne. I threw myself on this man's mercy. He discovered that I was likely, with my business habits, to be of some use to him, and he took me into his house. I worked for what he pleased to give me; traveled about for him in Switzerland; deserved his confidence, and won it. Till within the last few months I remained with him, and only left my employment to enter, by my master's own desire, the house of his brother, established also as a silk-mercer, at Chalons-sur-Marne. In the counting house of this merchant I am corresponding clerk; and am only able to come and see you now, by offering to undertake a special business mission for my employer at Paris. It is drudgery, at my time of life, after all I have gone through—but my hard work is innocent work. I am not obliged to cringe for every crown-piece I put in my pocket—not bound to denounce, deceive, and dog to death other men, before I can earn my bread, and scrape together money enough to bury me. I am ending a bad, base life harmlessly at last. It is a poor thing to do, but it is something done—and even that contents a man of my age. In short, I am happier than I used to be, or at least less ashamed when I look people like you in the face."

"Hush! hush!" interrupted Rose, laying her hand on his arm. "I cannot allow you to talk of yourself in that way, even in jest."

"I was speaking in earnest," answered Lomaque, quietly; "but I won't weary you with any more words about myself. My story is told."

"All?" asked Trudaine. He looked searchingly, almost suspiciously, at Lomaque, as he put the question. "All?" he repeated. "Yours is a short story, my good friend! Perhaps you have forgotten some of it?"

Again Lomaque fidgeted and hesitated.

"Is it not a little hard on an old man to be always asking questions of him, and never answering one of his inquiries in return?" he said to Rose, very gaily as to manner, but rather uneasily as to look.

"He will not speak out till we two are alone," thought Trudaine. "It is best to risk nothing, and to humor him."

"Come, come," he said aloud. "no grumbling. I admit that it is your turn to hear our story now; and I will do my best to gratify you. But before I begin," he added, turning to his sister, "let me suggest, Rose, that if you have any household matters to settle upstairs——"

"I know what you mean," she interrupted, hurriedly taking up the work which during the last few minutes she had allowed to drop into her lap; "but I am stronger than you think; I can face the worst of our recollections composedly. Go on, Louis; pray go on—I am quite fit to stop and hear you."

"You know what we suffered in the first days of our suspense, after the success of your stratagem," said Trudaine, turning to Lomaque. "I think it was on the evening after we had seen you for the last time at St. Lazare, that strange confused rumors of an impending convulsion in Paris first penetrated within our prison walls. During the next few days the faces of our gaolers were enough to show us that those rumors were true, and that the Reign of Terror was actually threatened with overthrow at the hands of the Moderate Party. We had hardly time to hope everything from this blessed change, before the tremendous news of Robespierre's attempted suicide, then of his condemnation and execution, reached us. The confusion produced in the prison was beyond all description. The accused who had been tried and the accused who had not been tried got mingled together. From the day of Robespierre's arrest, no orders came to the authorities, no death lists reached the prison. The gaolers, terrified by rumors that the lowest accomplices of the tyrant would be held responsible, and be condemned with him, made no attempt to maintain order. Some of them—that humpbacked man among the rest—deserted their duties altogether. The disorganization was so complete, that when the commissioners from the new government came to St. Lazare, some of us were actually half starving from want of the bare necessaries of life. To inquire separately into our cases was found to be impossible. Sometimes the necessary papers were lost; sometimes what documents remained were incomprehensible to the new commissioners. They were obliged, at last, to make short work of it by calling us up before them in dozens. Tried or not tried, we had all been arrested by the tyrant, had all been accused of conspiracy against him, and were all ready to hail the new government as the salvation of France. In nine cases out of ten, our best claim to be discharged was derived from these circumstances.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Chinese and Cockroaches.

Cockroaches are never willingly slain by Chinamen. They consider them sacred insects, and think it portends ill-luck to step on them. As they never make any effort to exterminate them, the Chinese quarters are usually overrun with these pests.

Effect of Advancement.

"Your wife is a very talented woman, I should imagine, Mr. X."

"Talented! I should say so. Why, she even talks Greek in her sleep."—Brooklyn Life.

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